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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2016

TAGS: PREL PGOV UGNA IZ LE KS

SUBJECT: MOFAT SUPPORTS TROOP EXTENSION IN IRAQ AND UNIFIL  
DISPATCH TO LEBANON

Classified By: A/DCM Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) On November 24, MOFAT Director-General for American Affairs Cho Tae-yong told A/DCM that President Roh's administration had decided to submit a motion to the National Assembly requesting authorization for a one-year extension of ROK troop deployment in Iraq, but at a lower force level. In order to secure the extension to December 2007, the administration was proposing a reduction from 2,300 to 1,200 ROK troops in Iraq. Cho explained that the ROKG in 2007 could consider further revisions to troop levels after taking into account local conditions in Iraq and the policies of other contributors to the multinational force in Iraq.

¶2. (C) DG Cho informed A/DCM that, in addition, the Roh administration had agreed to propose to the National Assembly that Seoul send 400 troops to the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon. Unlike the contentious troop extension to Iraq, Cho stated that the ROKG would have an easier time defending its decision to send troops to Lebanon because it could characterize the move as adhering to a UN undertaking. Cho joked that some MOFAT officials had characterized the decision as transferring 400 troops from ROKG command to UNSYG-designate Ban Ki-moon (former ROK Foreign Minister).  
VERSHBOW